

# Israel's Early Warning System In the Arab World

By PAUL JACOBS

**A major factor in  
Israel's survival  
has been the work  
of her intelligence  
people, some of  
them working deep  
inside Arab states.**

**T**HE comparison to a James Bond exploit was inevitable, although airlifting a stolen 7-ton radar station would have been rejected by Ian Fleming, Bond's creator, as too fanciful, too improbable even for his implausible hero. Yet to the world's astonishment, Zahal, the Israeli Defense Forces, in December stole and then airlifted to Israel a 7-ton Russian-built radar station, together with its crew.

That feat, carried out only days

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after the Israelis had managed to spirit five gunboats from a shipyard in France, was front-page news everywhere except the Soviet orbit, for obvious reasons. Yet, in the extensive coverage of these exploits one element common to both operations has been overlooked: neither the theft and airlifting of the radar station nor the clandestine departure of the gunboats could have been accomplished without the most precise and detailed intelligence operations, the kind of operations characteristic of the Israeli intelligence forces.

In the past few years alone, Israeli intelligence groups have carried out, successfully, such varied assignments as kidnapping Adolph Eichmann from Argentina and flying him, secretly, to Israel; tracing and bringing back to Israel from a Brooklyn tenement a little boy who had been spirited

away from his parents by a group of Orthodox Jewish zealots; discovering that David Ben Gurion's military adviser was a Russian spy; mapping in exact detail the locations of all Arab military installations; passing on within an hour the details of a secret meeting between Gamal Abdel Nasser and a Soviet ambassador, held in Nasser's office; and recording a telephone discussion between Nasser and King Hussein of Jordan.

Indeed, the extraordinary ability of Israel to penetrate, deeply, into the Arab world has become the subject of innumerable jokes. Typically, on the day when an Egyptian general in whom Nasser had placed great hope was killed in an Israeli attack on a Suez Canal installation, a joke made the rounds about an Israeli radio broadcaster who supposedly announced the event, adding: "However, this good news has its bad side, too, for when the Egyptian general was killed, we lost our best spy."

**B**UT such wisecracks bring no laughter to the Arab world. There, government leaders, at least, know the capabilities of Israeli intelligence; know, for example, that only because of an utterly improbable mischance was one of the Syrian military establishment's most trusted confidantes revealed as an Israeli spy, and subsequently executed. They know, too, that although Nasser had been surprised by the 1961 coup of the Syrian Army officers against Egypt, which ended the short-lived unification of Syria and Egypt, the Israelis were aware of the action well in advance. So, too, in the years prior to the 1967 war, Israeli officials were able, routinely, to give U.N. representatives the names and villages of Arabs who participated in border raids.

And if any Arab leaders had any doubt about the ability of the Israeli intelligence operations to infiltrate the world of Islam, those doubts were resolved during the 1967 war. That war, labeled the Six-Day War, might more correctly have been called the "two-and-a-half-hour war," for the ultimate Israeli victory was almost certain only 150 minutes after the war started; in that short time, the Egyptian air force was almost completely destroyed, many of its planes caught on the concrete ramps during the 9-15 minutes during which they were serviced by ground crews. Israeli intelligence, preparing for every

contingency, had been effectively that the Israelis not only when and for Arab planes would be between flights, but even which planes were real and which were dummies.

For weeks prior to the war, Israeli planes had flown false sorties over Egypt in order to make the Arab air forces respond. And when the Arab planes landed, after consuming their fuel, the exact instant of touchdown was noted by Israeli intelligence agents. When the planes took off again, that time was noted, too, and Israel knew very quickly that the Egyptian planes would be on the ground between 9 and 15 minutes, ample time for wiping them out between flights, if necessary.

**B**ut the intelligence officers knew much more about the Egyptian planes and their pilots than touchdown times. That knowledge was decisive when the Israeli jets attacked, evading the Arab radar.

"Four hours before takeoff, we were awakened for briefing," said an Israeli pilot at the time. "When we got to the briefing room, we were given large photo maps of the airfields. The position of every plane was shown to us and we were told which ones were real and which were dummies. We were even told of the new location of a squadron—and they even knew who was flying each of the planes—which had been shifted from one airfield to another only two hours before the briefing started. When we got over the airfields, we knew exactly what to hit and exactly how long we had to do it in."

So accurate was the intelligence about the Egyptian air force, that, after the few Arab pilots who managed to get airborne had taken off, the Israelis opened up psychological warfare, broadcasting to the pilots by exact name, exhorting them to return home, giving their addresses and telling them that their wives and children, who were also named, missed them badly. Israeli intelligence had even trained people to mimic the voices of the Egyptian air force dispatchers, so that if an Egyptian pilot whose plane had been hit even slightly called for instructions, the Israelis cut in and advised him to bail out.

American music was played over the radios, perhaps helping to create the

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